



Flu Season

DE and IDPH work to provide planning resources to Iowa schools

The Iowa Department of Education (DE) and the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) are working together to prepare for the 2009-2010 influenza season and are providing materials to assist Iowa's K-12 school officials in their 2009-2010 influenza season planning.

The Technical Report for State and Local Public Health Officials and School Administrators on CDC Guidance for School (K-12) Responses to Influenza During the 2009-2010 School Year is available at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/technical-report.htm. There are recommendations for conditions of "similar severity as in spring 2009" and recommendations for conditions of "increased severity." Currently, the severity of illness associated with the circulating strains of influenza is similar to spring 2009. Should the severity increase, the DE and IDPH will issue additional communications to schools recommending a shift to the "increased severity" recommendations.

In addition, the CDC has a communications toolkit to help districts prepare for the flu for schools with grades K-12 is available at www.cdc.gov/h1n1flu/schools/toolkit/pdf/schoolflutoolkit.pdf. The toolkit contains fact sheets for parents, staff, and students, signs for posting in schools, and template information letters that schools can distribute.

In addition, the DE and IDPH are working on materials to assist Iowa schools. This information can be found at <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/h1n1/schools.asp>. The materials include a letter template for schools to distribute to parents/guardians. The template provides tips for keeping students healthy and discusses the importance of excluding ill children until 24 hours after fever resolves absent the use of fever-reducing drugs. Advice and a fact sheet with tips for discussing influenza with children in order to minimize stress and confusion is also provided.

Environmental cleaning and disinfection resources including a general use fact sheet and quick guide for schools are also available. The information provides recommendations for prioritizing cleaning efforts and clarification about the types of cleaning products appropriate for influenza.

Descriptions of school reporting and surveillance systems are also available. Schools are asked to report absenteeism when 10 percent or more of the total enrollment is absent on any given day. Reports can be made by calling the IDPH Center for Acute Disease Epidemiology at 800-362-2735 or by faxing the form available at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/iowa_school_absenteeism.pdf to 515-281-5698. The Iowa Influenza Surveillance Network (IISN) is recruiting schools to participate in the surveillance program. Additional information is available at http://www.idph.state.ia.us/adper/common/pdf/flu_brochure.pdf. The CDC has developed an online novel influenza A (H1N1)-related school dismissal reporting system. Visit <http://www.idph.state.ia.us/h1n1/schools.asp> for a description.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture announced circumstances in which schools and community organizations may continue to provide reimbursable meals to low-income children during school closures related to novel influenza A (H1N1). The DE will contact district school food authorities with this information.

The DE strongly encourages school districts to collaborate with their local public health department on influenza planning activities. For questions about novel influenza A (H1N1) vaccine distribution in the local community, please contact your local public health departments. Access the IDPH Website frequently for Iowa-specific updates.

For more information, contact the Centers for Acute Disease Epidemiology at the Iowa Department of Public Health (800-362-2736) or Charlotte Burt at the Iowa Department of Education at 515-281-5327 or charlotte.burt@iowa.gov.